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India's Struggle For Freedom

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P. N. Chopra

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INDIA'S STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

P. N. CHOPRA

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

AUGUST 1984 (*Sravana 1906*)

© PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

PRICE RS. 3.00

**PUBLISHED BY THE DIRECTOR PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & BROADCASTING
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PATIALA HOUSE NEW DELHI-110001**

Sales Emporia : Publications Division

SUPER BAZAR CONNAUGHT CIRCUS NEW DELHI-110001

COMMERCE HOUSE CURRIMBOY ROAD BALLARD PIER BOMBAY-400038

8 ESPLANADE EAST CALCUTTA-700069

LL AUDITORIUM ANNA SALAI MADRAS-600002

BIHAR STATE CO-OPERATIVE BANK BUILDING ASHOKA RAJ PATH PATNA-800004

PRESS ROAD TRIVANDRUM-695001

10-B, STATION ROAD LUCKNOW-226001

STATE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM BUILDING PUBLIC GARDEN HYDERABAD-500004

PRINTED BY GOWARDHAN KAPUR & SONS NEW DELHI-110064

Hard Won Freedom

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In the first batch of 20 books in this series in English and Indian languages we have great pleasure in presenting to our readers a concise account of "India's Struggle for Freedom" in a lucid style. This is the first out of five titles to be brought out in English by this Division.

We shall feel amply rewarded if this short book on the great Indian struggle arouses in our readers, especially the younger generation, the desired interest to know more about the brave Indians who challenged the overwhelming British might and overthrew it, and get inspiration for preparing themselves to make sacrifices the nation would demand to preserve this hard won freedom.

(DR) S. S. SHASHI
DIRECTOR, PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

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Setting the Stage

Many of us now take the independence of our country for granted. We forget that it was only about 37 years ago that we won our freedom from foreign rule. The struggle for freedom lasted about 200 years during which our freedom fighters braved untold sufferings, tortures and imprisonment. Thousands of them were hanged on the gallows or blown to death with cannons. The heroes of our freedom struggle came from every corner of the country. They did not speak one language. They did not belong to one religion or one caste. They rose above these narrow loyalties and considerations. An intense love for their motherland and a keenness to see it free permeated all their existence.

The struggle for freedom actually began in the second half of the 19th century, though isolated attempts were made in various parts of the country to bring the British rule in India to an end about a century earlier. The English had come to India as traders around A.D. 1600 when the English East India

Company founded by private individuals for trade, received the Royal Charter from Queen Elizabeth and began to make rapid progress.

As the time passed, the British rulers invested it with various kinds of powers including the right to raise military forces and to exercise sovereignty on behalf of the Crown. By 1707 when Aurangzeb, the last of the great Mughal kings died, the British Company was well set to take a leading share in hastening the pace of the decline of the Mughal Empire and to establish a firm base for its own rise to political power.

Aurangzeb's successors were too weak to exercise any real authority. The Sikhs and the Marathas were growing in power. There were also the people from across the north-west frontiers who were eagerly looking for an opportunity to march into the fertile plains of the Punjab. The shattering invasion of Nadir Shah, the ruler of Persia, in 1739 gave the death blow to the Mughal Empire. Eight years later, an Afghan chief Ahmad Shah Abdali founded a kingdom in Afghanistan and carried on several raids into India. The Mughal Emperor ceded all the territories upto Sirhind in the Punjab to him.

The Maratha power was now the only one that could save India from these disasters. The political

influence of the Marathas reached its highest point under the Peshwa Balaji Bajirao (1740-60). The Maratha forces occupied Lahore after driving away the Afghans (1758). But evil days were soon to come. Abdali reoccupied the Punjab in 1759 and met the Maratha forces in 1761 at Panipat. He was actively helped by some of the Indian powers—the Rohillas and the Vizir Shuja-ud-Daulah of Avadh; while the Rajputs and the Sikhs remained neutral. The Marathas were routed at the battle of Panipat (1761). The Mughal Empire had already been shattered and the Marathas failed to rebuild one. Thus the field was open for the British who came to trade but founded an empire in India.

Meanwhile in 1757 the English had taken possession of Bengal. This was achieved more by intrigues and treachery than by military superiority. Our country has suffered tremendously due to the betrayal of some self-seeking individuals since the olden times. Siraj-ud-Daulah, Nawab of Bengal, was an incompetent ruler. Clive, an official of the East India Company entered into a conspiracy with Mir Jafar, the Commander-in-Chief of the Nawab's forces. It was stipulated that Mir Jafar would help the British as a reward for which he would be placed on the throne and in turn various rewards and advantages would be given

to the English Company. Siraj-ud-Daulah was defeated in the battle of Plassey on 23 June 1757. The main forces of Mir Jafar stood still on the battlefield and refused to come to the aid of their master.

The Battle of Plassey (1757) is famous in the annals of British rule in India. It made the British the virtual rulers of Bengal. They enthroned and then removed Mir Jafar and made his son-in-law Mir Qasim, Nawab of Bengal. But the moment he tried to assert his authority he was defeated and fled to the Nawab of Avadh who with the support of the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam invaded Bengal but was defeated and forced to conclude a treaty with the British. The Mughal Emperor was thus reduced to the position of a puppet.

The English had also defeated their European rivals in India, the French, and established their supremacy. With the Sikh ruler of the Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the English signed a treaty of friendship in 1809. But after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and consequent disorders due to his weak successors, the British occupied the Punjab in 1849. Thus the English became masters of large areas of India which they exploited for their commercial interests. In the short span of 70 years, India from the world's principal producer and exporter of cotton fabrics in the

eighteenth century, was reduced to the position of one of the largest consumers of foreign manufactures. India's economy was shattered. It now supplied raw material to British factories and instead received machine-made goods. The British policy resulted in unprecedented economic drain and millions of rupees were transferred from Indian hoards to British banks. It resulted in the misery of the masses, the increase in the incidence of famine and disease and the chronic unemployment in the country.

The period of a hundred years after the battle of Plassey (1757) witnessed not only the expansion of British domination practically all over India, changes in the system of administration but also the spread of Western ideas through education heralding what is called the 'new age or renaissance in India.

Warren Hastings was appointed Governor of Bengal in 1772, after the departure of Clive and later on became the first Governor-General of India. He introduced a system by which land tax was put on auction and settlement was made over to the highest bidder for a period of five years. The effect was ruinous. The temporary holder of the land wanted to make as much money as he could during his short tenure; he oppressed the poor tenants and did nothing to effect any improvement in the land. Cornwallis who

succeeded Hastings in 1786 made the Permanent Settlement with the Zamindars on the payment of an annual revenue which was fixed and could not be increased. The system was very harsh on the peasants who had to meet the demand of the Zamindar and had to borrow frequently at exorbitant interest from the moneylender who took possession of their lands. Soon there arose a large number of peasants without any lands. William Bentinck who became the Governor-General (1825-35) carried on certain reforms. He abolished the practice of *Sati*, encouraged remarrying of widows, and opened the doors of employment for Indians on higher posts. He also discarded oriental learning in favour of the knowledge of European literature and science to be imparted through English. Persian was abolished as a court language. In these reforms, Bentinck received the support of liberal Indians, particularly Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833). Raja Rammohan Roy's views on the freedom of speech, liberty of the Press, reduction of land revenue, Indianization of the army, separation of the judiciary from the executive and the codification of law mark him to be the first among the makers of modern India. Raja Rammohan Roy was quite conscious of the challenge of the western civilization and he felt the need of a new philosophy which would assimilate the modernism of the West without sacrificing India's

cultural heritage. He founded the society known as the Brahmo Samaj on 20 August 1828. Monotheism or the Unity of God was the cardinal principle of this body which did not believe in religious dogmas or idol worship. Brahma worship consisted of recitation of Vedic hymns besides devotional music, meditation and contemplation. The great social reformer Debendra Nath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen and the educationist Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar were members of this society. With the passage of time, these views spread all over the country. India produced more and more leaders of thought in the 19th century who believed that she must be relieved of her political bondage. The names of Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) and Swami Dayanand (1824-1883) deserve special mention in this connection. A disciple of the great saint Ramakrishna, he undertook a triumphant tour of the United States to attend the World Congress of Religions where his discourses made a deep impact on world religious leaders. While Swami Dayanand, founder of the Arya Samaj, was an intellectual giant who pleaded the infallibility of the Vedas and *Aryasthan* for Aryans. Both of these leaders besides others were anxious that British should quit India. While some concentrated on social reforms as a preliminary to her political freedom, the majority of them strove to gain Swaraj as the first important step towards the modernization of India.

However the revolutionary reforms carried on by the British, coupled with the introduction of railways and building of roads and canals to facilitate their trade, were resented by large number of Indians. Many of them believed that the British were undermining their religion and ancient culture. Their fears were further confirmed by the activities of the missionaries who were quite active in converting the natives to Christianity. The net result of these changes was that the smooth current of traditional Indian life was violently disturbed. The annexation of the territories of Indian rulers on one pretext or the other was resented by the rulers as well as their subjects. The spirit of discontent expressed itself on various occasions and at various places in the first half of the 19th century. The army mutinies at Vellore in 1806 and at Barrackpore (March 1857) were particularly noteworthy among them. Such events proved to be the forerunners of the Great Uprising of 1857 which shook the foundations of the British rule in India. The introduction of the Enfield rifle served as the immediate cause of the Revolt. The sepoys had to bite off the end of the cartridge which they believed was greased with the fat of cows and pigs in order to pollute both the Hindus and Muslims and to convert them to Christianity. These apprehensions later on proved to be true to a great extent.

The great outbreak of 1857 is one of those episodes of Indian history in the modern age which has served as a source of inspiration to the coming generations, many of whom regarded it as the "first war of national independence". There is, however, no denying the fact that it was the first organised attempt on the part of the Indians for the emancipation of their country.

The rebellious spirit was evident at Barrackpore on 29 March 1857, when a sepoy struck a blow to his officer. It soon spread to Meerut and Lucknow. The sepoys at Meerut rose in a body, murdered the Europeans and burnt their houses and then marched to Delhi. These rebels were soon joined by others at Delhi. There they proclaimed Bahadur Shah, the last of the Mughals, as the rightful Emperor of India. The rebellion soon spread to other parts of the U.P. as well as the Central Provinces (Madhya Pradesh). The British were taken by surprise and in most places, the sepoys had no difficulty in driving away the officers and their families and becoming masters of the places. The crowning glory of 1857 was the famous Rani of Jhansi (1835-58) who had taken a vow to take revenge on the British for their annexation of her state after the death of her husband Raja Gangadhar Rao. She drove the British out of Jhansi and inflicted further defeats on the British. She fought valiantly against the British forces

and joined hands with the rebel leader Tatya Tope (1854-59), a trusted lieutenant of Nana Sahib of Kanpur. She commanded her forces wearing male attire and was mortally wounded in Gwalior on 18 June 1858. Her valour won the admiration of her British adversaries. Bahadur Shah was captured and deposed to Rangoon where he died in prison. He was a poet with nom-de-plume of *Zafar*. Some of his poems tell us about the last days of the emperor in prison thousands of miles away from his beloved country. The British inflicted untold miseries on the people. Thousands of Indians were hanged and their properties confiscated.

No doubt the British came out victorious at the end but the Indians too gained in the sense that the movement became a symbol of inspiration and sacrifice for the subsequent generations. The leaders of the outbreak were both men and women, most important being Rani Laxmi Bai, Bahadur Shah, Nana Sahib, Tatya Tope, Begum Hazrat Mahal and Azimullah. Some of them led troops to the battlefield and fought valiantly, while others suffered imprisonment, exile and eventual death.

The immediate result of the happenings of 1857 was the transfer of power from the East India company to the Crown. The days of the East India Company which had exploited India and ruined its economy were

over. The transfer of power was announced by the Queen's Proclamation of 1 November 1858. Lord Canning became the Viceroy of India and began to rule India as the representative of the British Crown. The British also declared that they had no intention to extend the limits of their kingdom. Religious freedom was assured and promises were made to open all public offices to subjects irrespective of colour or creed. But this change-over did not put an end to the sufferings of the people. India had been and continued to be exploited by its foreign rulers, the British. This fact reflected in the poverty of the people, was further aggravated by repeated occurrence of famines on a widespread scale. A no less disconcerting feature was the racial arrogance of the British. This manifested in rude behaviour towards Indians sometimes accompanied by brutal assaults, and turning respectable Indians out of railway compartments. To cite a few instances, a British planter of Assam shot dead the father of a coolie girl whom he wanted for his lust, but in the trial the British Jury acquitted him. A British major at Sialkot travelling with his wife without ticket entered a compartment occupied by some Indians and forced them to leave. Lt. House at Agra forced some Indian first class passengers to leave the compartment by threatening them with a revolver. He was simply fined by the Court. Educated Indians also resented the

discrimination shown in the recruitment to the covenanted civil service. All their efforts to persuade the British authorities to raise the age of recruitment and to hold the Indian Civil Service examinations simultaneously in India and England failed.

The main task of focussing attention on these matters and the consequent need for reform fell on the shoulders of the political leaders. Prominent among those who associated and voiced political views were Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee (1844-1906), Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), Surendranath Banerjea (1848-1925), Pherozechah Mehta (1845-1915), Anand Mohan Bose (1846-1890) and Dinshaw Edulji Wacha (1844-1936). It was about this time that another leader M. G. Ranade (1842-1901) of Maharashtra had founded another association, the Sarvajanik Sabha. It took up the grievances of the people against bureaucracy. In northern India, the working of this spirit was marked by the emergence of the Arya Samaj founded by the great reformer Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883). The secret aim of the latter was to work for the deliverance of the country from foreign rule.

The advanced political ideas of these leaders particularly from Maharashtra and Bengal led to the convening of an All-India Political Conference in Calcutta in December 1883. This Conference may justly

be regarded as the precursor of the Indian National Congress. The credit for founding the premier political organisation, the Indian National Congress, goes to Allan Octavian Hume (1829-1912), a retired civilian, son of the founder of the Radical Party in England. Hume had seen the great discontentment among the people during the closing years of Lord Lytton's Viceroyalty (1876-1880). He thought it would be a public benefit if there existed some responsible organisation through which the Government could be kept informed regarding Indian public opinion.

The first Indian National Congress met in Bombay in 1885 under the presidentship of Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, a barrister from Bengal and the second and the third sessions were held respectively at Calcutta and Madras under the presidentship of Dadabhai Naoroji and Badruddin Tyabji (1844-1906). The Congress gradually developed into a powerful political organisation with an all-India character. The number of delegates rose from 72 in Calcutta to 1248 at the fourth session at Allahabad. Henceforward year after year the Congress met for three days in different cities by rotation and passed a number of resolutions, protesting against the abuses and reforms in the various branches of administration. They pressed for greater representation of Indians in government services,

holding of simultaneous examinations in India and England for the Indian Civil Service, grant of Imperial Commissions to Indians, appointment of Indians to the Executive Councils, elected representatives in a majority in the councils, reduction of salt-tax, income tax, etc. Though the Congress followed a policy of moderation in the earlier stages, it did help in the political advancement of India. The annual gatherings of Indians from all parts of the country fostered patriotic feelings and awakened political consciousness among the educated classes. Dadabhai Naoroji even visited England and carried on propaganda there in the name of the Congress and on behalf of the people of India. He was able to win the sympathies of a large number of Englishmen including Members of Parliament, with the result that a British Committee of the Congress was established in England and a journal *India* was also brought out. In 1893, Sir William Wedderburn (1838-1918) and W. S. Caine, M.P. (1842-1903), who were friends of India, set up an Indian Parliamentary Committee to agitate in the House of Commons for Indian political reforms. These developments were not to the liking of the British authorities in India. Therefore, they managed to excite opposition to the Congress by demonstrations against it through the United Indian Patriotic Association of which Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) was the

Secretary, and the British Association of Oudh. A great educationist, Sir Syed Ahmad started Anglo-Oriental College in 1875 which was later raised to the present Aligarh Muslim University in 1920. Syed Ahmad was a great admirer of the British and loyal to them. He bitterly criticized the Congress, as he thought that Indians were not mature for self-rule.

Despite such bitter and unfriendly criticism, however, the Congress forged ahead. The Viceroy Lord Dufferin condemned the Congress for having distributed seditious literature among the masses. However, the British government tried to pacify the Indians by liberalizing the Councils. The Council Act of 1892 provided for the nomination of non-official members to the Governor-General's Council as well as in the Provincial Councils. However, these reforms fell far short of the popular demands. But the principle of separate representation of Muslims was adopted in the Act. In this connection we see the imperialistic policy of divide-and-rule, henceforth systematically adopted by the British Government. The Viceroy Lord Dufferin went out of his way to instigate the communal elements among the Muslims by declaring that "fifty millions of men are themselves a nation and a very powerful nation." The Secretary of State for India Lord Salisbury went a step further and said in a public

speech that "it would be impossible for England to hand over the Indian Muslims to the tender mercies of hostile numerical majority". The British Government was thus sowing the seeds of Pakistan more than half a century before it was actually born.

While the Congress was thus continuing its agitation for two decades on constitutional lines a new wave of nationalism was sweeping over Bengal and Maharashtra. The leaders of this movement were Lokmanya Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose, Bipin Chandra, Lajpat Rai and others. They disapproved of the mendicant policy of the Congress for securing reforms and decided upon a bold assertion of the rights with the strength of the mass of the people.

A great scholar Tilak, had chosen to become a politician and a man of action, being prompted by the impulse of liberating his country from foreign rule. He made it the great object of his life to diffuse the spirit of patriotism and nationalism among the masses. He believed that the policy of mendicancy, followed by the Congress, would never do and the Congress must assert itself forcefully in making its rightful demands. It was Tilak who, for the first time, set before the nation, in a clear manner, the attainment of self-government or *Swaraj* as the ideal rather than constitutional and administrative reforms. Lastly, it was Tilak who carried

the gospel of self-help and political agitation to the masses. He was arrested on a charge of inciting disaffection against the Government by means of his articles in his paper, the *Kesari* and sentenced to 18 months rigorous imprisonment. His arrest sent a wave of discontent and indignation throughout the country.

In Punjab Lajpat Rai (1865-1928), known as *Punjab Kesari* (lion of the Punjab) and in Bengal, Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932) who had been severely criticising the Congress strongly condemned the British Government.

A great revolutionary in his earlier days, Aurobindo Ghose stood for the complete independence of India. His articles in the *Karmayogin* and *Dharma* dealing with Indian nationalism led to his conviction. Well versed in Gita and holy scriptures of other religions, he later established the world famous Pondicherry Ashram for spiritual attainment.

The difference between the old set of leaders and the new school to which Tilak and Lajpat Rai belonged, is best illustrated in their respective attitudes towards the goal of the movement. The former, or the Moderates as they came to be known, wanted to bring about reforms in the administration under the aegis of the British rule, while the Extremists held that "good government is no substitute for self-government", and

therefore insisted on *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence.

It was at this time that Lord Curzon (1899-1905) came to India as Viceroy with a strong determination to stem the rising tide of nationhood. The dominant note of his policy throughout this period was that India was and must remain a possession of England, that England's imperial grip over her should be tightened and that no political advance should be thought of. In pursuance of his aim, he completely officialized the Calcutta Corporation and gave it a European majority by reducing the total membership by one-third. A similar policy was pursued in the Universities Act by which he extended control over the universities. The climax was reached in 1905 when Curzon partitioned the Province of Bengal into two parts. The Bengalis felt that the whole of their future was at stake and that it was a deliberate blow aimed at a growing solidarity of self-consciousness of the Bengali people. They tried to avert this vivisection by all lawful means. Never before in the history of British India any measure of the Government was opposed so vehemently or persistently with such unanimity. Curzon's obstinate refusal to pay any heed to the popular view in this matter sounded the death-knell of constitutional agitation. Amidst unprecedented scenes of enthusiasm, resolutions were

passed at a huge public meeting at Calcutta on August 7, 1905 to boycott British goods and adopt *Swadeshi* (use of indigenous goods) and to spread national education. Though the main argument advanced by the Government in favour of the Partition was administrative consideration viz. lightening the burden upon Bengal, the real motive was to "curb the growth of national feeling in politically advanced Bengal by drawing a wedge between Bengali speaking Hindus and Muslims and destroying their solidarity."

The soul stirring national song *Vande Mataram* composed by Bankim Chander Chatterji, now became the war cry against British imperialism. Hundreds of public meetings were held; shops which sold foreign goods were picketed; clashes occurred with the police as a result of which volunteers were imprisoned and students were flogged. The Boycott-Swadeshi movement rapidly spread to other parts of the country and assumed an All-India character. The Congress session held in 1906 (at Calcutta) not only endorsed its plans, but for the first time in its history laid down as its goal the system of Government obtaining in the self-governing British colonies, which the President Dadabhai Naoroji, summed up in one word '*Swaraj*'. The Moderates in the Congress, however, fought shy of the idea of boycott, though they accepted *Swadeshi*.

They criticized both the end and means of the Extremists as being impracticable. The difference in the views brought about a split in the organisation. The session at Surat was marked by a free fight in the meeting and the Police had to be called in to restore order.

The Moderates immediately afterwards drew up a new constitution and declared their objective to be the attainment by the people of India a system of Government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire. The Extremists who stood for *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence were thus excluded from the Party.

While the Moderates alone carried on the work of the Congress, the policy of repression adopted by the Government, especially after the Partition of Bengal, gave rise to a new party, later on known as the Revolutionary Party. Its declared object was to bring about the independence of the Motherland for the attainment of which there should be no hesitation to use arms. Secret societies and physical culture centres had already been established in the latter half of the 19th century in some parts of the country, especially in Bengal and Bihar. They collected arms and manufactured bombs. The anti-Partition agitation insisted on boycotting foreign goods and encouraging

Swadeshi. Students and school boys were being enlisted in picketing these operations. The secret societies found an ample opportunity on such occasions to preach revolutionary ideas and to excite violent activities. For example, on 6 December 1907, the train in which Sir Andrew Fraser, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, was travelling was derailed by a bomb near Midnapore. On 30 April 1908 at Muzaffarpur in Bihar, a bomb was thrown into a carriage killing two European ladies. This bomb was actually intended for Kingsford, a judge, who had incurred the displeasure of the revolutionaries. Of the two young men arrested, Khudiram Bose hardly 19 was hanged while Profulla Chakravarty shot himself dead to avoid arrest. The revolutionary movement continued and its most desperate effort was made in 1912 when the Viceroy Lord Hardinge was riding an elephant in a state procession through Delhi. A bomb was thrown which wounded him and killed the attendant just behind him. Forty-five year old Amir Chand, a great freedom fighter and a close associate of Rash Behari Bose, was arrested and sentenced to death along with Avadh Behari, Bal Mukand and Basant Kumar Biswas. Rash Behari, said to be the brain behind the conspiracy, later on fled and made Japan the centre of his activities.

In May 1907, the passing of the unpopular Canal

Colony Bill led to riots at Lahore; Rawalpindi and Lyallpur. Endeavours were even made to incite the troops at Ferozepore and Lyallpur. Two Punjab leaders, Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh, were arrested and deported. In Madras, disturbances followed after a series of lectures by Bipin Chandra Pal and Chidambaram Pillai of Tinnevely. In June 1911, Ashe, the District Magistrate of Tirunelveli (Tinnevely), was shot dead by a young Brahmin Vance Aiyar. In 1909, a brave young boy, Madan Lal Dhingra, from Punjab shot dead William Curzon Wylie, Political ADC in the India Office, London. With a smile on his face, he died at the gallows in Pentonville Prison, London, on 17 August 1909, thousands of miles away from his dear motherland. He defended his act which he described as "a humble revenge for the inhuman sufferings and transportation of patriotic Indian youths."

Faced with the necessity to check the growth of the revolutionary crime, the British Government decided on a policy of repressing the Extremists, conciliating the Moderates and, above all, alienating the Muslims from the Hindus. It tried sternly to suppress the Extremists applying its repressive laws. Newspapers were ordered not to publish any news regarding their activities which might not be to the liking of the Government. Government also took over powers to ban holding of

meetings, if and when necessary. Aurobindo Ghose, a well-known leader of the Extremists (later on he had laid the foundation of the Pondicherry Ashram) was prosecuted for conspiracy to wage war against the King. Tilak was imprisoned for 6 years on a charge of sedition and deported to Mandalay. The other leader of the group, Lajpat Rai of Punjab, had been exiled and Bipin Chandra Pal was already in jail in 1907.

While repressing the Extremist leaders, the Government tried to conciliate the Moderates, who were also getting impatient. The Indian Councils Act, popularly known as the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909, was passed to expand constitutional measure. The policy of 'Divide and Rule' was used by introducing separate electorates for the Muslims and giving them weightage. This was virtually a stab in the back of Indian nationalism, and had been achieved by encouraging Muslim leaders to meet the Viceroy in a delegation and to urge for the representation of Muslims as a separate community. Lord Minto the Viceroy (1907-13), expressed full accord with the views and demands of the deputationists. The All-India Muslim League was formed in 1906 and its objective was to support wherever possible, all measures emanating from the Government and to protect the cause and advance the interests of the Muslims throughout the country, and to controvert the growing

influence of the Indian National Congress. The policy of 'Divide and Rule' henceforth became the keynote of British policy in India.

The Moderates were disappointed with the Morley-Minto reforms which had created a rift among Hindus and Muslims by accepting religion as the basis of determining a political minority. The forces of communalism were bound to create complications in the struggle for *Swaraj*.

The British Government now tried to pacify the Congress by revoking the Partition of Bengal at the Delhi Durbar (1911). This act together, with the decision to raise Bengal to the status of Governor's province gave great satisfaction to the people of Bengal, and appeased the nationalists. But the Extremists were not at all satisfied with the Morley-Minto Reforms. Some Indian revolutionaries were now operating from outside India. The Indians who had migrated to USA, Canada, etc. were treated very shabbily. They were discriminated in all public places such as hotels, parks and theatres. Lala Hardayal, Bhai Parmanand and some other leaders from India, organised and united the Indians in America. The headquarters of the organisation known as the Ghadar Party was established at San Francisco in April 1913. Their object was to end the British rule in India through armed

revolution and establish a just government in India. In 1914 occurred the famous episode of *Kamagata Maru*. To meet the conditions of the Government of Canada, against the immigrants, Baba Gurdit Singh, a contractor at Singapore chartered a Japanese ship *Kamagata Maru* and sailed to Canada with about 400 Indian immigrants on board. However, the passengers, with the exception of twenty-two, were not allowed to land at Vancouver in Canada. The passengers refused to land and stayed on in the ship for two months and suffered many hardships. Ultimately, they decided to return but none of them was allowed to land at Hong Kong or Singapore where many of them had their homes. The British Government refused to let them land even at Calcutta. In a clash with the police, 18 of them were killed, 24 wounded, and about 200 interned. The impact of the *Kamagata Maru* episode was that Ghadriles started returning to India in batches. Evading the police they reached their villages. They tried to create disaffection among the troops and even fixed a date for general uprising on 21 February 1915 but their plans were leaked out by some of the traitors, as a result of which a large number of them were hanged or sentenced to transportation for life. The disaffected regiments were disarmed and many soldiers were court martialled and executed.

Some revolutionaries sided with Germany against England on the outbreak of World War I. A young Tamil, named Champakaraman Pillai started in Berlin the Indian National Party with Hardayal, Taraknath Das, Barkatullah, Chandra Kant Chakravarty and Heramba Lal Gupta as members.

In the Punjab and in Bengal the situation was rapidly deteriorating. To meet the situation, the Government of India armed itself by passing the Defence of India Act, March 1915, which authorised the appointment of special Tribunals for the trial of revolutionary crimes. The efforts of the revolutionaries did not produce a tangible result. In the meanwhile, other factors outside India had begun to influence the course of Indian politics. Indians abroad were not being well treated.

Indian Muslims felt greatly hurt after the end of the War, when contrary to the assurances given to them, the Turkish Empire was bifurcated. England played a double game. Earlier they themselves had raised the image of Turkey as *Khalifa* before the Indian Muslims in 1878 when it suited their interests. The Indian Muslims recognized the Sultan of Turkey as their *Khalifa* and even his name had been included in the Friday prayers. The British, however, did not change their stand and played an active role in the

destruction of the Turkish Empire. The Muslims expressed their resentment against the British Government by getting closer to the Hindus. The All-India Muslim League changed its earlier attitude and adopted a resolution on 22 March 1913 at Lucknow, demanding the attainment of self-government for India along with the other communities. In this spirit of friendship both the Congress and the Muslim League concluded the 'Lucknow Pact' vide which the Congress now agreed to separate electorates for Muslims to which it had formerly been opposed. Both the organisations presented a joint scheme of reforms known as the 'Congress-League Scheme'. It embodied self-government. The spirit of unity which prevailed in the country in 1916 re-united the Moderates and the Extremists to work together under the Indian National Congress. The National Movement had received much support by Mrs. Annie Besant, a British lady (1847-1933) who had made India her home and established a college at Varanasi. She joined the Indian National Congress in 1914. She organised a Home Rule League at Madras in 1916. Tilak started another Home Rule League at Poona in the same year. Soon after both the Home Rule Leagues joined hands to push forward the Congress-League Scheme.

Enter the Mahatma

World War I (1914-18) had profound repercussions on India in various ways. She supplied to the Allies men, money and munitions. The people hoped that as a consequence to this effort, India would be rewarded by being given the status of a self-governing dominion. This hope was only partly fulfilled by the declaration of British policy made by Montague, the Secretary of State for India, on 20 August 1917. 'The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of increasing the association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.'

Montague came to India to study the political situation along with the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford (1916-20) and to assess the extent and nature of the constitutional reforms which India required. The Montford report they produced became the basis of the Government of India Act, 1919. Before, however, this Act was passed, the War had ended and the Government of India had passed the Rowlatt Act to

replace the Defence of India Act which had expired after the War.

The Rowlatt Act provoked great opposition in the whole country. The people who were already hard pressed due to post-war shortages, epidemics and inflation were indignant over the new attempts of the Government to arm themselves with power to suppress their freedom. The result was the birth of a *Satyagraha* campaign launched under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi with the objective of conducting an organised agitation against the 'Black Bills' all over the country. Serious popular outbreaks followed, especially in the Punjab, after which Martial Law was imposed. The greatest tragedy, however, occurred at Amritsar which had been placed under the charge of Brigadier Dyer who issued orders forbidding processions and meetings. Local Indian leaders called upon the people to assemble at the Jallianwala Bagh. Dyer regarded it as a challenge to his authority. With a force of 90 soldiers and two armoured cars equipped with machine guns he reached the Jallianwala Bagh. Due to the narrowness of the lane leading to the Bagh, he left the armoured cars outside. Dyer positioned his armed men, on a raised ground fully commanding the small park which contained an estimated twenty-five thousand people. Within seconds of his arrival there, Dyer ordered his soldiers to open

fire on the large crowd. The soldiers fired low under order from Dyer. The people found themselves completely trapped. Scores of people fell dead on the spot. Waves of men fell on each other and many died of suffocation. Firing continued for ten minutes and was not stopped till the entire ammunition (1650 rounds) was exhausted. At the end of the firing there was not a place where people were not lying dead in large numbers. The ghastly sight, however, failed to move the callous heart of Dyer who deliberately took no steps to provide medical aid to the wounded. Over a thousand people were killed. Dyer was not content with the blood-bath and resorted to even more cruel measures. He issued 'crawling order' by which a large number of citizens of Amritsar were subjected to the humiliation of crawling on their bellies along the streets. It was followed by indiscriminate arrests, confiscation of properties and whipping of thousands of innocent people. This national tragedy moved the whole nation who were now determined to throw off the foreign yoke under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, who, on his return from South Africa, threw himself heart and soul into India's struggle for freedom. Tilak's death in 1920 left the field open and Gandhiji now dominated the political scene. His leadership opened a new chapter in India's struggle for freedom.

For over 25 years from 1920, the Congress was led by Mahatma Gandhi. He chalked out a programme of action which had not been adopted by any political leader so far. He transformed the national movement of the elite into a people's movement for liberty. He lived in villages and led the simple life of that of a peasant. He identified himself with the masses who understood him and responded to his call. He was a champion of Hindu-Muslim unity which he regarded as essential for the achievement of freedom. He wholeheartedly supported the *Khilafat* cause as he felt that the Indian Muslims were genuinely aggrieved over the wrong done to Turkey. The Muslims were agitated over the British policy and a mass movement was taking shape under the Ali brothers, Shaukat Ali and Mohammad Ali in 1920. It goes to the credit of Gandhiji that he did not allow the *Khilafat* Movement to function in an exclusively Muslim context. He saw in the situation an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Muslims as would not arise in a hundred years. The Congress at its special session held in Calcutta in September 1920, under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai rejected Government of India Act, 1919, and took the decision to lead a non-violent, non-cooperation movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The Ali brothers made common cause with the Congress for the freedom of the country.

Gandhiji was a lawyer and a political leader in South Africa where he worked for India. Before coming to India, he had gained considerable experience of organising nationalist groups and starting strikes. He fully understood the ways of the British Government and their functioning. His greatest contribution to India's struggle for freedom was a "carefully worked out doctrine of passive resistance which he termed *Satyagraha*". It also involved the doctrine of non-violence.

The Non-Cooperation Movement, inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi, is an important milestone in India's march towards independence. The programme of the Non-Cooperation Movement conceived by Gandhiji was extensive and many-sided. Its central purpose was to involve people in various ways. A non-cooperator was expected to give up his title and any nominated post which he held. He was not to attend any government function or Darbar. He was to withdraw his children from educational institutions recognised by government and to admit them to national institutions as they became available. He was to withdraw his cases from the courts and get them decided by private arbitration courts. He was to remain unconcerned with election to the legislatures. He was expected to spin and weave *Khadi* and in any case to use *Swadeshi* cloth.

(Some people expressed doubts regarding the connection between the wearing of *khadi* and *swaraj*. Gandhiji's reply was characteristic of him. To a people famishing and idle, the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages. "Hunger is the argument which is driving India to the spinning wheel") He should try to remove untouchability from the country. Above all a non-cooperator had to remain non-violent. If a whole country followed this programme sincerely, India could attain *Swaraj* within one year.

Large number of Congress volunteers propagated this programme and stressed the need to collect funds for the Swarajya Sabha and the Tilak Memorial. Eminent Congress leaders travelled all over the country and set before the people their own examples as sincere non-cooperators. Many leading lawyers such as Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das, S. Srinivasa Iyengar and C. Rajagopalachari gave up their roaring practice. To meet the situation the government followed a policy of repression. The movements of many leaders were restricted, while others were arrested. Volunteers picketing before liquor and foreign cloth shops were fired upon.

The people were greatly moved by Gandhiji and his spiritual methods, and thronged around the new

leader. As Jawaharlal Nehru observed "the peasants rolled in and, in the new garb, the Congress began to assume the look of a vast agrarian organisation with a strong sprinkling of the middle classes."

Thousands of students abstained from schools and colleges and many voters boycotted the elections held under the Government of India Act of 1919. People defied the law and nearly 30,000 men and women courted arrest (1921-22). The Congress reply to the repression was the decision to start civil disobedience which included non-payment of taxes. Gandhiji wanted to try this experiment on a small scale. Bardoli and Anand Taluka in Surat and Kaira districts were selected for the purpose. But he decided to suspend the movement due to an outbreak of violence on the part of non-cooperators in Chauri Chaura, a village near Gorakhpur in U.P. on 5. February 1922. The infuriated mob then set fire a police station and 22 policemen were burnt to death. Gandhiji condemned this violence and suspended the non-cooperation movement. He was arrested and convicted for six years. he was released before the expiry of his term in 1924 on grounds of ill-health.

Gandhiji meanwhile devoted himself to the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity and insisted on the use of *khaddar* or home spun cloth. He gave up his

flowing *dhoti* and his cap and put on a loin cloth. His home-spun bag contained his food—the nuts and dates—and the writing paper.

On the face of it the Non-Cooperation Movement had failed to achieve *Swaraj* within one year. From a long term point of view, however, Gandhiji had made it a mass movement popular among the masses who were no longer afraid of the might of British Government and were ready to follow their leader to the jail. The people had become brave to suffer for the cause of freedom. The fear-complex which had kept them silent spectators when only a few among them went to the gallows or were shot dead, seems to have vanished from their mind. They joined in thousands in the non-violent struggle for freedom. Imprisonment and suffering had now become a badge of honour. The foundation of a strong national movement was thus truly laid. Gandhiji came to represent and symbolize all things that were or seemed good in the struggle for independence, the dignity of self-government, the sanctity of a crusade for righteousness.

Meanwhile the reforms of 1919 had been put into effect and the legislative bodies had been enlarged. But there was a sharp difference of opinion among the Congress leaders over the question of participating in the Councils and other legislative bodies. Some of the

important leaders such as C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru advocated 'council entry' for wrecking the councils from within. The majority did not approve of it. Therefore the pro-council group formed the Swarajya Party with Deshbandhu C. R. Das as president and Motilal Nehru as secretary. It is interesting to recall that Motilal Nehru, father of Pandit Jawaharlal, who had a roaring practice and lived in a European style gave up, to quote the Viceroy Lord Irwin, "his elegant European clothes and assumed for ever the flowing robes of white home-spun which he seemed to wear with the majesty of a Roman senator." The new party contested the elections; they had some success in so far as they were able to convince the government that the system of dyarchy introduced in the Provinces was unworkable. The main objective of wrecking the Council from within, however, was not fulfilled and the influence of the Swarajya Party on Indian politics suffered a decline especially after the death of C. R. Das in June 1925.

Gandhiji was released from jail in 1924. He wanted to retire from politics due to the failure of the Non-Cooperation Movement but was persuaded to stay on. He was greatly dismayed over the deterioration in Hindu-Muslim relations and all his efforts to bring amity among them failed. He even undertook a fast of 21 days as "a penance for unity" as he called it.

Mohammad Ali, President of the Congress, called a Unity Conference where some resolutions were passed exhorting Hindus and Muslims to live like brothers. Meanwhile, the British government repealed the Press Act and the Rowlatt Act of 1919. They also acceded to the Indian demand for holding of simultaneous civil service examination in India and London. But there was consistent demand from the Congress for full-self-governing Dominion Status within the British Empire and Provincial Autonomy in the provinces. At the invitation of the Viceroy, Lord Irwin (1926-31), the British Government appointed a Parliamentary Commission before the expiring of the ten years to look into the working of the Reforms of 1919 before taking any further step. This Commission was headed by Sir John Simon. No Indian was included in the Commission. This was greatly resented to by the political parties which closed their ranks and organised a countrywide boycott. This Commission visited India twice in 1928-29 and was greeted with black flags. The Punjab leader, Lala Lajpat Rai, heading a demonstration against the Commission at Lahore, was beaten by policemen. The belief that his death some time later was the result of the assault "sent a thrill of indignation throughout the country."

In reply to a challenge from the Secretary of State

that Indians were not able to produce an agreed constitution, the All-Parties Conference appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of Pandit Motilal Nehru to frame a constitution for the country. The Committee suggested Dominion Status for India. It opposed electorates but agreed to reservations of seats for Muslims where they were in a minority. The report was approved by the All-Parties Conference with minor modifications. It did not, however, meet the demands of some Muslim leaders who wanted complete autonomy and residuary powers to be vested in the provinces. The Muslim League rejected the Nehru Report and M.A. Jinnah now sided with it. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, U.P. Congress leader, supported the Nehru Report and joint electorates. The Congress accepted the Nehru scheme and Dominion Status if it was implemented by the end of 1929. As there was no favourable response from the British Government, the Congress at its meeting held at Lahore in December 1929, under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru, declared that complete independence was the national goal.

The Independence Resolution of 31 December 1929 led to the preparation of civil disobedience programme. The biographer of Lord Irwin observed that Congress volunteers spread themselves throughout

the towns and villages to stir (the Indian masses) out of their ancient torpor and to remove the wax of centuries from their ears. Before launching the movement, Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, enumerating the evils of British rule which had impelled him to plan a *satyagraha* campaign by manufacturing salt at Dandi, a sea-side village in Gujarat. The Viceroy curtly wrote back to him deprecating his move to violate the law and endanger public peace. The die was cast. Gandhiji left the Sabarmati Ashram on 12 March 1930 alongwith his 78 trusted followers and began his famous march to Dandi on foot, accompanied by a band of followers. He reached Dandi on 5 April covering a distance of 360 kilometers on foot in 24 days. His march through the villages inspired the people tremendously and acted as a signal for mass defiance of the laws promulgated by the British authorities. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: "As people followed the fortunes of the marching column of pilgrims from day to day, the temperature of the country went up." Gandhiji personally led the way on 6 April by dipping into the sea water and returning with some salt deposited by the water on the shore. However, Gandhiji was arrested before he could reach Dharasena, the place selected for defying the law. His place was taken by Abbas Tyabji who too was arrested. Now Sarojini Naidu arrived to direct the raid on 22

May Web Miller, a correspondent of the United Press of USA, who was an eyewitness, has given a graphic description of the heroic non-violent fight put up by the salt raiders. He wrote:

“Mme. Naidu called for prayers before the march started and the whole assemblage knelt. She exhorted them: ‘Gandhiji’s body is in jail but his soul is with you. India’s prestige is in your hands. You must not use violence under any circumstances. Slowly and steadily they (the volunteers) reached near the salt deposits when the police rained blows on their heads. Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing in pain with fractured skulls or broken shoulders. Then another column marched slowly towards the police and within a few minutes they were beaten down. There was no fight, no struggle, the marchers simply walked forward until struck down. There were no outcries, only groans after they fell.”

This description gives a glimpse of the wonderful spirit of self-sacrifice and self-discipline which Gandhiji had by “his precept and example instilled into the minds of his devoted followers.”

In Central Provinces (Madhya Pradesh) and Bombay (Maharashtra) the civil resisters cut down trees in the forests in defiance of the forest laws. In

other words they resorted to what was called "*Jungli Satyagraha*". In Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) and Bengal, a systematic campaign for non-payment of taxes and land revenue began. The Civil Disobedience Movement thus gathered momentum and about ninety thousand people courted arrest.

The response of Indian women to Gandhiji's call took by surprise not only the Government but even the Indians themselves. In Delhi alone 1,600 women were arrested. The condition in other parts of the country was not different. Foreign visitors like H. N. Brailsford and G. Slocombe were greatly impressed by the impact the Movement made on the women of India almost overnight and observed: "If Civil Disobedience Movement has accomplished nothing else but the emancipation of the women of India, it would have fully justified itself." At the tender age of 12, Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter Indira had built up an army of 6,000 children at Allahabad and similar armies were organised by ladies at Madras and Bombay. The young volunteers did intelligence work, brought valuable information and carried messages.

It is interesting to mention that in spite of the opposition from the Muslim League, the Muslim masses did participate in large numbers in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. Hundreds of them

were arrested and at least 54 lost their lives in the movement. Twenty-five year old Babu Gannu became a martyr during the movement. He picketed the foreign cloth and lay before a truck full of imported cloth. In spite of the entreaties of the Congress volunteers, the truck driver, an English Sergeant, moved his truck and ran over Babu Gannu who was crushed under the wheels of the truck. While attending his funeral, one Vajpayee died of lathi blow and another Lakshmi Dass fell a victim to British bullets. Mallapa Dhanasetti and Rasool Kuran of Karnataka were hanged along with Sri Kishan and Jagannath in 1931. They said in a message to their countrymen: "We who were unknown till recently have won celebrity. We are going to meet death gladly with no fears in our hearts. We are innocent. . . still we are not sad that death takes us away instead of our having to live a long life for twenty years confined within the four walls of a prison. We must die that the cause of our motherland may prosper." In N.W.F.P., the Civil Disobedience Movement was led by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, popularly known as Frontier Gandhi. "It was a wonderful achievement of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his party to have converted the temperamentally violent Pathans to a non-violent army of freedom fighters. The tremendous sacrifices made by the members of the party set a glorious example to the

people in general and to the Mussalmans in particular."

It was at this time that the Garhwali troops refused to open fire on an unarmed crowd at Peshawar and many of them were court martialled.

The revolutionaries also became active. The aim of the revolutionaries was to wrest freedom from the alien government through armed rebellion. A revolt in the army, followed by rising of the revolutionaries in different parts of the country formed a part of their strategy. Some of them also believed that by killing tyrannical British officials they would create consternation in the minds of the governing class and bring the government to its knees. The names of some of the revolutionaries—Khudi Ram Bose, Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqullah, Chander Shekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, to name only a few, shine the brightest. Khudi Ram Bose took part in several political dacoities and in a bomb attack on the Bengal Governor's special train, attempted killing of two Englishmen and a Sessions Judge before he could be arrested and hanged on the gallows at the young age of 19 in the Muzaffarpur Jail on 11 August 1908. Bismil was involved in several raids and eventually died on the gallows in Gorakhpur Central Jail on 19 December 1927. He was a poet and some of his verses are still recited by all patriotic Indians. Along with Bismil, Ashfaqullah was involved

in the Kakori Conspiracy Case and was sentenced to death. The day before he was hanged he told his sobbing nephew: "If I am not allowed to observe the last ceremony of the noblest ordeal with all dignity and steadiness, then the sanctity of the occasion will be tarnished. Today, I feel myself worthy of the honour with the hope that a sacred and great responsibility for the liberation of the motherland has been entrusted to me. You should feel happy and proud that one of yours is fortunate enough to offer his life. You must remember that the Hindu community has dedicated great sons like Kanailal and Khudi Ram. To me this is a good fortune that belonging to the Muslim community, I have acquired the privilege of following in the footsteps of these great martyrs." Chander Shekhar Azad took part in the several political dacoities including the Kakori Mail Dacoity and carried an award of Rs. 30,000 over his head. Betrayed by a companion, he fought the big police party with revolvers in both hands. He killed many police men and injured the British Police Superintendent. He died fighting on 27 February 1931 after his arms and legs had been riddled with bullets. The legendary Bhagat Singh was a great revolutionary. He refused to marry and dedicated his life to the liberation of India. In order to avenge the assault on Lala Lajpat Rai during the demonstration against the Simon Commission at

Lahore in November 1928, he shot and killed J.P. Saunders, Assistant Superintendent of Police on 17 December 1928. Later on he exploded a bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly and scattered leaflets. He was arrested and sentenced to death. This brave youngman alongwith his comrades Sukhdev and Rajguru died fearlessly on the gallows in the Lahore Central Jail on 23 March 1931. Bhagat Singh's martyrdom shook the entire nation and there were *hartals* and processions throughout the country.

The Chittagong armoury in Bengal was raided on 18 April 1930 by a group of revolutionaries for capturing arms in sufficient quantity. The raid was led by the brave and daring Surya Sen who seized the magazines and guard room. A pitched battle was fought against British soldiers on the Jalalabad Hill. Twice he evaded arrest and slipped after a brief encounter. Eventually, he was captured and died on the gallows on 11 January 1934.

The British Government used many repressive measures but were not able to crush the movement.

Meanwhile, the British Government decided that before submitting a bill for constitutional reforms to Parliament on the basis of the Simon Commission Report it would call a Round Table Conference in London. Representatives of both British India and the

Indian States would be called "for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement." This Conference met three times during 1930-32.

The First Round Table Conference to discuss the future set up of India was opened by the King on 12 November 1930; Gandhiji and other Congress leaders were in jail. The representatives of the non-Congress parties including Muslim League and representatives from princely states deliberated with the delegates from British Labour, Liberal and Conservative Parties. It was unanimously agreed that future of India should be a Federation of all India composed of British India and Indian states and all agreed to the grant of responsible government leading to at a future date Dominion Status. The question of minorities remained unsolved. Without Gandhiji the British government knew, no conference could be considered successful. Gandhiji was, therefore, released. He met Viceroy and after prolonged negotiations Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed which provided for the withdrawal of Civil Disobedience Movement, release of political prisoners excepting those convicted of violent activities, and Congress accepted to attend the Second Round Table Conference. During Irwin-Gandhi parleys, it is interesting to recall the observations of Irwin about Mahatma Gandhi in his letter to the King, "that small

wizard , rather emaciated, no front tooth. It is a personality very poorly adorned with this world's trimmings. And yet you cannot help feeling the force of character behind the sharp little lines and immensely active and acutely working mind." The Viceroy noted that as the time of Gandhiji's arrival at Viceregal Lodge approached, "almost every servant in the house seemed to have found some urgent task near the entrance" to catch a glimpse of their leader.

Some Congress leaders, particularly Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose were not happy over Irwin-Gandhi Pact. The situation was further worsened by the execution of Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru and Sukhdev. It led to processions, *hartals* and protest meetings throughout the country. However, Gandhiji was able to attend the Second Round Table Conference. He opposed separate electorates and held the view that Hindus and Muslims could live together in a United India. Gandhiji made a passionate appeal for independence but British government was not responsive. Moreover his designs were greatly thwarted due to the opposition from the Muslim League, the Depressed Classes League and the princes.

When Gandhiji landed in Bombay on 28 December 1931 after attending the Round Table Conference, he was arrested and the mass Civil Disobedience

Movement began. In all about 61,000 persons courted arrests. It was indeed the biggest non-violent movement launched by Gandhiji. The British philosopher condemned the action of British authorities in India. He cited the example of Ireland and said: "who now attempts to justify the period of black and tar tyranny in Ireland, who will have a good word to say for the present tyranny in Ireland? No one. It is in our power to cause much misery, perhaps much moral determination; it is not in our power permanently to hold India by power." The British resorted to indiscriminate firing, lathi charges, whipping and even posting of punitive police in the villages which broke the spirit of the people. Gandhiji now appealed to Congressmen to devote themselves to constructive work which included promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, hand-spinning, etc.

The Civil Disobedience Movements launched by Gandhiji had far-reaching consequences. The message of the Congress was carried to every nook and corner of the country and the people were aroused to fight for the freedom of their country. The struggle was no longer confined to elite classes but became a mass movement in which people from every walk of life participated.

Meanwhile, the British government published

Ramsay Macdonald's Communal Award instituting separate electorates for the 'Depressed Classes'. Gandhiji was deeply shocked and undertook a 'fast unto death' to secure its modification. The Depressed Classes under their leader Ambedkar relented and the Poona Pact was concluded between the Congress and the Depressed Classes. According to it, seats were reserved for the depressed classes in the General Constituencies. The government agreed to this settlement and Gandhiji broke his fast. After the third and final session of the Conference was held without the representation of the Congress, the British Government published a White Paper projecting the reforms. After this document was examined and reported by a Joint Select Committee of both the Houses of Parliament, the Government of India Act, 1935, was passed.

As in the case of the Act of 1919 (popularly known as the Montford Reforms), the Congress decided to give the reforms a trial, even though they did not fully satisfy the national aspirations. The Congress fought the elections at the Centre and in the Provinces. It won absolute majority in five provinces and was the single largest party in three others. Only in the Punjab, NWFP and Sind was it in a minority. After getting the necessary clarification from the Viceroy regarding the

power of interference of the Government, the Congress formed ministries in Bombay, Madras, Bihar, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Orissa and later on in NWFP. In Sind the ruling ministry adopted the policies and programmes of the Congress. The Muslim League fared badly in the elections, but still Jinnah demanded that the Congress should agree to have its representations in all provincial assemblies as they could not trust the Congress Muslim members. The Congress refused to yield, which made Jinnah bitter.

The Congress ministries did useful work in the field of education and social and economic uplift for about two years.

Meanwhile, the Second World War broke out in 1939, when Lord Linlithgow was the Viceroy of India. Hitler began to overrun the whole of Europe. The British government declared war against Nazi Germany on 3 September 1939. The Viceroy proclaimed that India, too, was at war with Germany. He did not care to consult the Central Assembly or the representatives of the people. This was resented by the Congress which registered a strong protest against India being drawn into belligerency without the consent of her people. The Congress asked the Government to explain its war aims. It also made it clear that India could only

cooperate in the war if she was declared an independent country. The British government stated that it would be prepared to consider the modification of the 1935 Act after the war was over. The Congress finding that negotiations were fruitless, decided in October 1939, that the Congress ministries should resign office. In October-November 1939, the Congress Ministries resigned in seven provinces.

Meanwhile, communal relations deteriorated steadily. The Congress and the Muslim League drifted apart. The resignation of the Congress Ministries in October 1939 was hailed by the Muslim League which celebrated 22 December 1939 as the "Day of Deliverance" from the tyranny and injustice of the Congress rule. Muslim League leader M. A. Jinnah launched campaign for two-nation theory and blamed the Congress Ministries for discrimination against Muslims which, however, he could not prove. It must be added that in almost all the provinces there were Muslim ministers who were duly elected by the masses. A liberal M.P. declared that "the Congress Ministries had administered the laws of India with striking success and the Muslims, Hindus and other communities have borne testimony to the fair and just way in which Indian administration have worked in the provincial areas." This was the opinion of many other British

Members of Parliament. The Viceroy, too, declared in the White Paper that "the Congress Ministries had conducted their affairs with great success."

However, the Muslim League carried on a virulent campaign. Illiterate Muslim masses were led away by the middle class intelligentsia who, under the leadership of Jinnah, asked for separate home state for Muslims in the Lahore session of the Muslim League in 1940. This idea had been mooted as early as 1927 by Chaudhari Rahmat Ali, a student in Cambridge in England, but had been turned down by the Indian Muslim Delegation to the Round Table Conference as "the fantasy of the mind of a student". Rahmat Ali had, however, persisted in his idea and was able to convert the Muslim students from the sub-continent who went for studies overseas.

This movement now began to gather strength in India. The great poet Mohd. Iqbal once an ardent nationalist who had written the famous song "*Sare Jahan Se Achha Hindostan Hamara*" now contemplated his conception of a Muslim unit in North India comprising the Punjab, Sind, NWFP and Baluchistan which he expressed publicly while presiding over the Allahabad session of the all-India Muslim League in 1936. It seems certain that before the League adopted the Pakistan resolution, some of its

members had sounded the Secretary of State for India Lord Zetland and also the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow and secured from both some sort of assurances of encouragement which could not, however, be given openly.

The British also took advantage of the resignation of Congress ministries to impose minority governments, i.e., the government which does not enjoy the confidence of the majority of the members of Legislative Assembly—in some of the provinces from where the Congress ministries had resigned. M. A. Jinnah had declared that the Congress movement was as much against the Muslim demand as against the war effort of the British. This helped the League to increase its following manifolds and when the Congress leaders were released in 1944, the League had become a power to be reckoned with. The British Government had certainly played a very important role in exploiting the situation and creating insurmountable wedge between the two communities. They had not only imposed minority ministries in the provinces which were led by their own favourites but at the same time gave an opportunity to the Muslim League to propagate their ideology among the Muslim masses with the active co-operation of the bureaucracy.

Meanwhile, the war took a turn for the worse for

the Allies and Germany overran almost the whole of Europe. The Congress did not like to exploit the situation and offered to cooperate with the British Government if a provisional national government was set up at the Centre and the right to independence was recognized. In August 1940, the British Government made an offer. The Viceroy's Executive Council would be expanded to include more Indians and an Advisory War Council would be set up. It assured the minorities its intention not to agree to any system of government in which they would be coerced into submission. After the War a representative Indian body would be set up to frame the new constitution. The Congress rejected the offer. 'We want independence and not dominion or any other status', said Jawaharlal Nehru. The negotiations between the Congress and the British government having failed, Congress decided to start the Individual Civil Disobedience Campaign in October 1940 as a protest against British policy. During the next 14 months about 20,000 persons were convicted. The first to lead the movement was Acharya Vinoba Bhave, chief disciple of Gandhiji (who later on started the Bhoodan Movement which aimed at persuading people to give land which would later on be distributed among the landless poor). Among those arrested were Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. The former was sentenced to 4 years rigorous

imprisonment.

The British Government stuck to the August offer and was unwilling to make any further offer to meet the demands of Congress. The bitterness of India was further increased by the declaration of Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister, in the House of Commons on 9 September 1941, that the Atlantic Charter was in full accord with British Policy in India as embodied in the August offer. The Atlantic Charter had enumerated the War policy of Britain and U.S.A. and declared that "they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live, and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them".

Exit the British

While the Indian people were feeling completely disillusioned and frustrated, the war took an alarming turn, so far as India was concerned, due to the entry of Japan as an ally of the powers against Britain. With lightening speed the Japanese forces took over

Singapore, overran Malaya and captured Rangoon and Mandalay. Thus in 1942, India came very near to the theatre of war and in fact there were air raids of Vishakhapatnam and Kakinada in April 1942. Japanese warships also appeared in the Bay of Bengal. There was great anxiety in the Allied circles over the fate of India. President Roosevelt of the United States and Chiang Kai Shek of China put pressure on the British Government to come to some settlement with Indian leaders. Churchill, the British Prime Minister, therefore, decided to depute Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the Cabinet, to proceed to India to solve the deadlock.

Cripps arrived in India in March 1942 and held discussions with the Indian leaders. His proposals envisaged the formation of an Indian Union with full Dominion Status with the right of secession after the war on the basis of a constitution drafted by a Constituent Assembly. During the War the Viceroy's Council was to be reconstituted into an Interim Government of the party leaders, but until 'the new constitution can be framed, His Majesty's government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain the control and direction of the defence of India as part of their World War effort.' The Congress insisted that it must be a Cabinet Government with full powers.

Secondly, there was also difference of opinion about the retention of the defence portfolio by the British. The Indian leaders felt that the complete transfer of power to Indian hands was essential to organize what could be a people's war. The British Government was not able to accede to this demand and therefore the offer was withdrawn. Gandhiji called the British offer as a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank.

The failure of the Cripps Mission brought about a distinct change in Gandhiji's mood. Hitherto he had been against launching any mass movement during the War. He did not wish to hamper the British in their struggle. He now asked for complete British withdrawal from India. He argued that by their doing so, India would not only regain her freedom, but would at the same time avoid becoming a theatre of war between Britain and Japan. With the passing of the 'Quit India' Resolution by the All India Congress Committee on 8 August 1942, the die was cast.

Early next morning (9 August 1942) Gandhiji and members of the Working Committee were taken into custody under the Defence of India rules. The detention of the Working Committee members at Ahmadgarh Fort was kept a secret while it was made known to Gandhiji and his party were confined at Aga Khan Palace, Poona. The Congress Committee was declared

unlawful organisation; Congress headquarters at Allahabad were sealed up; A.I.C.C. funds were confiscated. Wholesale arrests of Congressmen began in every province and ordinances and new Defence of India Rules were issued immediately for official control over the publication of news and comments to such extent that several newspapers preferred to close down as a protest. There were spontaneous *hartals*. Throughout the country meetings were held. Processions were also taken out at some places but the demonstrations were peaceful and non-violent. The ruthless measures adopted by the Government, however, aggravated the situation. It was only when the police used force against the processionists, lathicharged them and even opened fire to disperse them that the movement took a violent turn. Concerted outbreaks of mob-violence, murder and sabotage took place. The areas most affected were those where the Congress had the greatest hold among the masses or where the people had been hit by an economic crisis aggravated by the agitation. The whole of North Bihar, the eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra, coastal areas of Orissa, Satara and Khandesh in Maharashtra and Broach in Gujarat played an important role in the struggle. There was comparatively less trouble in Allahabad and Sind, while the movement in the Punjab and North-West Frontier

Province remained symbolic. In the Ballia district in Uttar Pradesh, Midnapore in Bengal, Satara in Maharashtra and in many parts of Bihar people were able to paralyse the British administration and set up their own government which worked effectively for some time. By the end of August, firm action by the police and the military to quote the official report, "had largely succeeded in suppressing mass lawlessness except in Assam," where the trouble had started rather late. The first phase of the movement seemed to have been over by the second week of September except in the eastern provinces. The movement went underground and concentrated attacks of planned nature were made on communications, government buildings and institutions. Soon bombs made their appearance in Bombay, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The movement had spent its fury by the end of the year though sporadic incidents continued to take place till the release of Gandhiji in May 1944.

The Government used the most stringent measures to suppress the movement. Thousands of persons were arrested and imprisoned and a large number of the people were killed where the police or the military resorted to firing. The police and the army resorted to firing 538 times. It is very difficult to assess with strict accuracy the exact number of persons condemned to

cruel punishments or put to death as martyrs for the cause of freedom. According to Jawaharlal Nehru, "the figures of the dead might vary from 4,000 to 10,000 which at least could only be a guess. Over 60,000 persons had been arrested up to the end of 1942. The number of persons convicted was 26,000 and of those detained under the Defence of India Rule 18,000. The cost of damage was officially estimated at about Rs. 10,000,000."

The Quit India Movement, in spite of its violence and intensity, did not succeed. The masses took part in the movement, but without any guidance or clear-cut plan. They sometimes felt concerned at the violent turn of events, which they knew would never win the approval of their leaders who were wedded to the cult of non-violence. There was lack of coordination among the participants who were widely separated from each other. Even in those areas where they had seized power, they did not know how to make it a starting point for the long march towards the country's freedom. The Movement, however, succeeded in demonstrating that people all over the country were ready to make all sacrifices for attaining freedom. The British rulers had ceased to command the loyalty or even the acceptance of the people. Foreign rule was doomed to wither away and the dawn of independence was now only a question of time.

While in India the Congress carried on its relentless struggle for the freedom of the country, the Indian National Army under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose lovingly called Netaji (Leader) and in cooperation with the Japanese, was marching towards the eastern frontier of India. Subhas Chandra Bose, a selfless patriot, had been elected President of the Indian National Congress in 1937 but he had to resign a few months later. His views were quite at variance with Congress leaders. While Gandhiji irrevocably stood against Fascism and armed struggle, Netaji saw no harm in taking outside help and in waging a violent struggle for the freedom of the country. World War II provided him an excellent opportunity to secure the help of the enemies of Britain to liberate India. He escaped from his confinement in Calcutta in 1941 and reached Germany from where he carried on anti-British propaganda. Meanwhile, a patriotic Indian Army had been raised by Rash Behari Bose, an old revolutionary who had been involved in the Hardinge Bomb Case in Delhi and was passing his days in exile in Japan. This army was mostly drawn from the Indian soldiers of the British army who had been made prisoners by the Japanese after the conquest of the Malaya Peninsula. Subhas took a great personal risk in travelling in a submarine from Germany to Japan and thence to Malaya where he took over the command of the Indian

National Army or the *Azad Hind Fauj* as it was then called. He was able to organise a sizeable Indian National Army out of the Indian prisoners of war and the local Indians of Malaya, Burma, Singapore, Thailand and Hongkong. It may be mentioned that out of about 65,000 Indian prisoners of war, about 20,000 joined Netaji, while the rest stayed on in Japanese prisons. He set up a Provincial Government of Free India at Singapore. The soldiers of the INA fought strenuous battles on various fronts in South East Asia and showed remarkable personal courage, but they were no match for the highly equipped armies of the British. The Indian National Army moved into the Indian frontier with the help of the Japanese forces but their attempt to invade India through Manipur and Assam failed as Burma was re-conquered by the Allied forces and the INA finally surrendered to the British in May 1945.

The trial of some of the captured army officers such as Shah Nawaz, Dhillon and Sehgal evoked patriotic feelings among all sections of the Indian people who forgot their internal strife and made efforts to save them from the gallows. Such was the popularity of the INA and the upsurge of the people that the leaders of the Congress as well as Muslim League had to fall in line and each of them claimed them as their

heroes. It is, however, to the credit of these brave soldiers that most of them favoured the secular Indian National Congress.

The tide of war had turned in favour of the Allies in 1944. Lord Wavell who had succeeded Lord Linlithgow released Mahatma Gandhi in May 1944. Gandhiji tried to solve the communal problem by holding discussions with Jinnah, but his efforts failed. The British Government now decided to reconstitute the Viceroy's Executive Council. Excepting the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, its other members were to be representatives of political parties. There was to be equal proportion of Hindus and Muslims on the Council. Lord Wavell convened a conference of various political parties at Simla, but the Congress and the Muslim League could not reach an amicable settlement. The Muslim League insisted on nominating the Muslim members of the Executive Council, while the Congress asserted its national character and wanted to appoint at least one Muslim member. The talks failed.

The trial of the Indian National Army officers in Delhi's Red Fort brought to light the heroic efforts made by the former soldiers of the British-Indian Army to liberate their country from foreign rule. This event had a great impact on Indians serving in the armed

forces under British command. Not merely did they fraternise with the defectors, who were regarded as true patriots, but they also became acutely conscious of their rights as 'Indian servicemen'. Their resentment against discriminatory treatment in respect of rations, pay and allowances, besides the racial prejudice shown by the British found expression in the revolt by a section of Indian personnel of the Royal Indian Navy. They took possession of some of the ships, mounted guns and made 'preparations to open fire on military guards. As the news of the revolt spread, the people in the city of Bombay held demonstrations. the police repeatedly opened fire and 200 of them were killed. The revolt had its repercussions in other cities like Karachi, Madras and Calcutta. The Army and the Air Force were also affected by this nationalistic upsurge in the Navy. On the intervention of the national leaders, the ratings surrendered.

Meanwhile, the war in Europe had ended in May 1945 and the General Elections in England were held soon after. The Labour Party came to power with Clement Attlee as the Prime Minister. The Labour Government realized the urgency of solving the India problem and ordered fresh elections to the Central and Provincial Legislatures to test the relative strength of the political parties. The elections resulted in a

sweeping victory for the Congress in the General seats, while the Muslim League won overwhelming majority in the Muslim seats. The British Government now decided to send a Mission of Cabinet Ministers to negotiate the final settlement. The Members of the Mission were Lord Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the board of trade and A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty. The Cabinet Mission arrived in India in March 1946 and for about a month held meetings with leaders of the Congress, the Muslim League and other sections of public opinion. There was, however, no agreement between leaders of the two main political parties, the Congress and the Muslim League, on the formation of an interim Government and the setting up of a Constituent Assembly to frame a constitution for India.

The Cabinet Mission proposed a Federal Union or British India which the States might join later. The Central Government was to deal with Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications. there was to be two groups of provinces, one predominantly Hindu and other predominantly Muslim. The provincial governments should deal with all subjects except those specified for the Centre and should have all the residuary sovereign rights. As regards the Indian

States, they were to take their appropriate place in the above structure on terms to be negotiated with them. As regards the Constituent Assembly, the Mission suggested that its members were to be those elected on a communal basis by the provincial legislative assemblies and the representatives of the States joining the Union. The Viceroy's Executive Council was to be re-constituted and all the portfolios including that of the War Member were to be held by the Indian leaders who were enjoying the confidence of the people. The Cabinet Mission proposals were not considered satisfactory by any political party, but they tried to utilise them for their own ends. The Muslim League was the first to accept the plan as it facilitated the creation of Pakistan by compulsory grouping of six Muslim majority provinces. The Congress agreed to join the Constituent Assembly to frame the Indian Constitution but it was unwilling to join the Interim Government. The Mission left the country on 29 June 1946. The Muslim League desired that the Viceroy should invite them to join the Viceroy's Executive Council as it had accepted the Mission scheme. But the Labour Government did not think it advisable to let Muslim League in while the Congress stood out.

A few weeks later, however, Congress agreed to join the Interim Government which took office on 2

September 1946 with Pandit Nehru as the Vice-President and six other Congress members, the League having spurned the offer. Jinnah was bitter and exhorted his followers to resort to "direct action". This led to large scale communal riots in East Bengal and the Punjab mostly instigated by the League, which resulted in the death of a large number of Hindus. Reprisals to these riots occurred in Bihar and U.P. in which Muslims suffered terribly. At this stage the Muslim League decided to join the Interim Council. Its main purpose, as explained by Ispahani, Jinnah's personal envoy to the U.S.A., was to carry on the struggle for Pakistan within as well as without the Government. The League refused to accept the convention of collective responsibility or the leadership of Nehru. In fact the Interim government consisted of a Congress bloc and a Muslim bloc each functioning under separate leadership. The Viceroy also failed to persuade Jinnah to let the Muslim League join the Constituent Assembly.

Attlee now made a last attempt to bring the two parties together and on his instruction Lord Wavell proceeded to London with Jawaharlal Nehru, Liaquat Ali Khan, M. A. Jinnah and Baldev Singh for a discussion with His Majesty's Government. The London talks, as expected, failed to bring about any

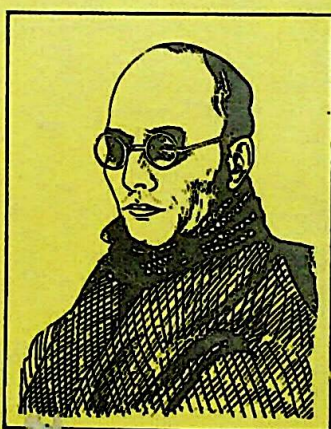
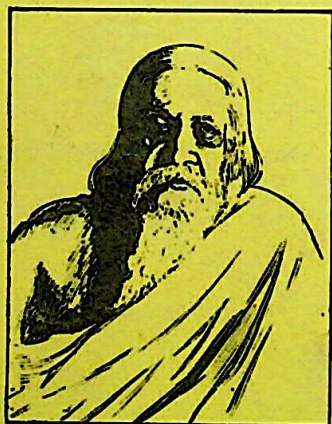
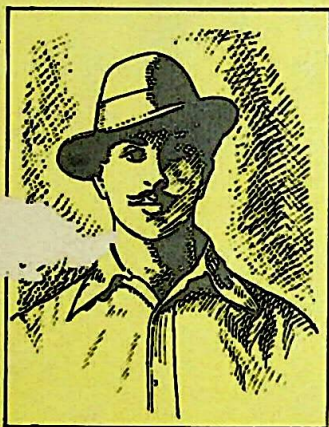
agreement. The British Government issued a statement on 6 December 1946, stating that if the Muslim League did not join the Constituent Assembly, the new constitution would not be forced on the Muslims. This made the work of the Constituent Assembly ineffective, as all the seventy four delegates of the Muslim League boycotted it.

The deadlock was broken by Prime Minister Attlee's announcement of 20 February 1947, that the British Government proposed to leave India at a date not later than June 1948. Lord Mountbatten was appointed the new Viceroy to take necessary steps for the final transfer of power. It was now apparent that leaders of the two political parties would not accept a compromise. Partition of India became inevitable. Only Gandhiji and Maulana Azad still opposed it and Pt. Nehru said, "we saw no other way of getting our freedom. . .in the near future we mean. . ." Gandhiji in his paper *Harijan* wrote on 20 July 1947, that "the British intervention has done the trick", and that Britain was leaving India as a cockpit between the two organised armies in pursuance of the policy of playing one community against another.

Mountbatten held discussions with the leaders of the various political parties and announced his plan on 3 June 1947. It accepted the principle of partition. if

the Muslim majority areas so desired. It was also agreed that in case of partition, power would be transferred to the two successor dominions. British paramountcy over the Indian princely states would lapse and these states were urged to join either of the dominions. The Plan was accepted by the Congress and the Muslim League. In accordance with the procedure laid down, two Commissions were appointed with Sir Cyril Radcliffe as Chairman of both to arrange the partition of Bengal and Punjab. The North-West Frontier Province and the district of Sylhet joined Pakistan after a plebiscite. Thus India and Pakistan became independent dominions on 15 August 1947.

India's freedom was won at last but as the historian Dr. Tara Chand writes, "It had brought with it severance of old ties the cruel traumatic experience of the dismemberment to a naturally united country, the violent disruption of a vision which throughout the history has served as a beacon."



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